



Miracle Monday

Elliot S. Maggin

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The man of steel meets a demon of fire! — — From another world, another dimension, a hellish fiend escapes to test the earth's greatest hero. — Possessing the body of a visitor from the future, and using the schemes and dreams of a master criminal, C.W. Saturn strikes at the heart of civilization--and the forces of chaos threaten to destroy the very order of the universe.

But the devastation of the world is not the evil one's goal, only his means to the corruption for the last Kryptonian--the superhero now stripped of his Clark Kent alias and fighting an enemy whose dark powers are as limitless as those of the Devil himself.

The second of Warner's series of Superman novels.

Miracle Monday Details

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Author : Elliot S. Maggin

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From Reader Review Miracle Monday for online ebook

Alan Kercinik says

I'd not read this book in years. At the time, Superman was the hero who people lined up at the movie theatre to see. Times have changed.

But for those who think Superman is too old-fashioned, who don't understand his appeal, should read this book. You'll shake your head and wonder why you don't like this charming, noble man more. Especially now, when so many find it so easy to compromise their principals and dignity.

Ian Stewart says

The best version of Superman.

Dave says

I first read this book when it was published in 1981, and I've re-read it every year in May since then. I love Mr. Maggin's comic book writing, and I think he has an excellent sense of who Superman is, at his core, as well as an understanding of Superman's supporting characters, but one of the things I most enjoy is the way he writes Lex Luthor, as someone who knew Clark Kent in Smallville when they were boys (and friends) together. Even when Lex becomes Earth's foremost criminal, he still has some sense of honor and integrity. The overall story involves Superman's battle against evil in the form of a demon from Hell, and how he fights that battle without losing himself in the process. It all comes down to an idea: There is a right and a wrong in the universe, and that distinction is not hard to make. Superman will always make that distinction, because that is who he is.

One other note I'd like to make. One of the main characters, Kristin Wells, is a great favorite of mine, and she appears in a few Bronze Age comic book stories which take place after this story, as a superhero in her own right, inspired, as many of us are, by the Man of Steel.

Lynn Walker says

Elliott did something fun with his Superman novels in putting them into the continuity of the comic book stories he wrote before the novels and then building on them in comic book and prose short stories he wrote afterwards. His portrayal of Superman is the logical maturation of Jerry Siegel's and is generally much kinder and smarter than the character is usually written. As a stand alone novel, I prefer Last Son of Krypton, but this is a fun read and gets bonus points for the added value it garnered in the comic book stories which built on its concepts and characters.

David Monroe says

Superman does not kill. Ever. That is the Miracle Monday Rule.

Miracle Monday was the second of two Superman novels, a follow-up to 1978's also-awesome Superman: Last Son of Krypton -- that were released to capitalize on the popularity of the Superman movies. Though, despite the presence of 8 pages of black and white photos of Christopher Reeve, Margot Kidder and Terence Stamp, Miracle Monday had nothing to do with the movies.

Instead, it's a prose version of Superman at his Bronze Age best, and stands as one of the all-time best Superman stories ever printed in any medium.

The plot focuses on a character named Kristen Wells, a historian from the 29th Century -- the year 2857, to be exact -- who travels back in time and goes undercover at the Daily Planet in order to discover the origins of Miracle Monday.

Of course, in true comic book time travel fashion, Wells ends up becoming a critical part of the holiday herself. A demon named C.W. Saturn -- released by Lex Luthor when he dabbles in magic and acting on the orders of the Ruler of Hell -- possesses Wells and unleashes hellish power all across the world, pushing Superman to the limit with threats that are both outlandish and genuinely sinister...culminating in forcing Superman to physically stop a nuclear war, and then exposing his identity as Clark Kent to the world.

His goal is to force Superman to stop him by killing Wells, taking an innocent life and destroying everything he stands for. But Superman is never for a second conflicted about whether or not he should take this action. The idea of Superman killing someone is, as the man himself says, nonsense. Superman does not take a life, even if it means he would have to spend the rest of his life battling Saturn. Superman explaining that he'll always be there to stop evil to a living embodiment of evil, and doing it like he's trying to break down the simplest fact for a child, is an amazing bit of writing. And of course, in the story, when faced with someone who is truly unshakable in his convictions and willing to sacrifice his life to do nothing but wage that never-ending battle, Saturn's hold on Wells is broken, and Superman is granted a wish.

He asks that everything that happened since Saturn's arrival be undone, and it is granted, with Saturn then being banished back to Hell. However, a lingering memory of the events remained within the souls of humanity, causing them to begin celebrating the day every year, on the third Monday of May, starting the Miracle Monday tradition. Everyone just remembers how relieved and happy they are on the third Monday in May, and they commemorate it every year. Kristin then returns to the future to reveal this fact to the public.

It's an amazing character study of how Superman works, and it also introduces some great ideas into the larger mythos of the character -- like time traveling historians crowding into the woods, shushing each other and trying not to be seen when the Kents find the rocket from Krypton, which is hilarious and wonderful. The holiday itself was very rarely mentioned in the actual comics, it does show up as a celebration in the future in Superman #400.

Rick Lee Lee James says

Elliot S. Maggin did a great job with this novel. I wish the next stand alone Superman movie would tell this

story from the 80's. Superman does not kill, not even the devil, period. If you're a Superman fan from the 80's then I think you will enjoy this time capsule inspired by the first Christopher Reeve film. Superman vs C. W. Saturn would be a great film, especially for Legion of Superhero fans.

Lou says

If you can find this book out there, snap it up.

One of the best written comic book stories I've ever seen.

I haven't seen it on a shelf in over 20 years so if you see it, it's worth whatever you have to pay for it.

Too bad Mr. Maggin didn't write any more of these Superman books. I'd read them all.

Update: You'll have to find it used, of course. Amazon has some sellers with it for under \$20. Also, pick up the second book, "Miracle Monday," for another great read. Again, good read.

Note: I got it from Glenn. His e-mail: madhatterspalace@yahoo.com.

Further Update: Reading through it again real quick and thoroughly enjoying it again!

Final Update: Upon re-reading it, it doesn't strike me as being as wonderful as the first one. The first one had much more of what you like to see in a comic book hero whereas this one tames it down quite a bit. Don't get me wrong, it's still a great read, just doesn't have the impact that the first one had.

--Wag--

Trey says

[There is a convoluted plot involving time travelers, the devil, and the world finding out Superman is Clark Kent, only to have their memories altered so we can return to the status quo. (hide spoiler)]

Jeremiah Murphy says

It's Superman fighting the devil, y'all. Five stars for describing how Lex Luthor broke out of jail to hear Noam Chomsky speak. It's a fun read that came across to me like what a late 70s/early 80s Superman TV show would be like.

Stephen says

This was the second and, sadly, last of Maggin's original Superman novels. The first was in many ways a retelling of the origin story while balancing that out with a new story and adventure. This one is, well,

different.

One of the things that makes the old superheroes seem less relatable to modern audiences is their code. Superman does not kill. Period. That's who he is. Now, of course, this code wasn't in place in the very early comics, but pretty soon, the writers decided to make all their superheroes have a similar code. So Superman is the big Boy Scout. He doesn't steal, he doesn't lie (with the exception of protecting his secret identity), drink, smoke or any of those things, because that's the whole point. It's not his powers that make him Superman, it's his code and his ideals and his reasons for doing what he does.

In 'Miracle Monday', a demon from Hell comes to test the Man of Steel. Not to beat him up or kill him; merely to make his life unbearable until he violates the very code he stands for. That's the whole point to this story. As such, it becomes very harrowing, indeed. For instance, the demon sets off EVERY nuclear weapon on the planet simultaneously - even the secret ones, even the hidden ones, ALL OF THEM. And of course, this is a job for Superman. As before, Maggin doesn't downplay the hero's great powers. Rather, he writes stories that challenge those powers to their breaking point. This book is very different than 'Last Son of Krypton': the first is sci-fi more than anything, while this is more about magic and myth. But the characters at the heart of the story stand out and make it seem immediate. Not to give anything away, but major events happen in this story to the accepted Superman dynamic, and it is fascinating to see how the different characters respond when secrets are brought out. Again, one of those books that defined a character for me and made me a lifetime Superfan.

Travis says

Okay, if you're the guy that wrote 'Last son of Krypton' how do you top Superman and Luthor teaming up to tangle with an alien menace?

You have Superman fight the devil, of course.

Lex Luthor cuts a deal with the devil and it involves a virus from space, a history student from the future and a lock of Superman's hair and it is brilliant.

Maggin takes his story ideas straight out of the Silver age comics, makes you believe in the world he's created and fills it up with the best characterization of Superman and his supporting cast to show up in a Superman story in years.

and the way Superman beats the devil (does that need a spoiler warning? Course not! he's Superman! we all knew he would win.) just makes you realize that Superman is just the coolest damn character in the world. He's the hero. The guy we wish was keeping an eye on things.

Robin Tell-Drake says

The degree to which these two little novels (Last Son of Krypton, Miracle Monday) have shaped my idea of how a novel works is a long-standing, embarrassing little secret of mine. Personally, despite the pop-culture nature of the very idea of a Superman novel, I have always felt Maggin accomplished some powerful and noteworthy storytelling here. This is Superman at his most godlike, but it's also a deeper, more thoroughgoing examination of his lifetime and psyche than I've ever seen attempted anywhere else. Lex Luthor, too, becomes a character with his own past and preoccupations, and dozens of projects underway at

all times few of which have anything to do with Superman. The ensemble cast around them is drawn on familiar characters from the comics, each done in similarly loving closeup, plus a pile of others from the author's own head. Maggin is a deft writer of dialogue, with a light comedic tone most of the time.

But structurally, these books are pretty intricate, with the main action often deliberately buried in a flurry of unrelated or tangentially related incidents (Maggin is also a great maker of lists, which may be a stylistic tic or may just be the inevitable result of larding on so much byplay while the plot goes sneaking along underneath). It's not hard to read them a couple times before you're strictly clear on which characters were actually Luthor in disguise all along, for example, because Maggin is quite content to let disguises of that sort go unmasked for many chapters in a row. When a new character or scene is introduced, its importance to the story can take quite a while to emerge, but you do need to pay attention if you want to catch it when the reveal comes.

Well worth your time whether you're particularly interested in the comics or not.

Jean-Pierre Vidrine says

This is an incredible story that is deceptively simple on the surface. Maggin makes interesting use of Superman's cast of characters, his power set, and the world he lives in unlike any other writer in any medium.

Bill Meeks says

This is probably my favorite Superman story. As others have said he does get a little long-winded in the second half of the book, but the Lex Luther/Superman relationship is probably the best version of the story. Even when he gets long-winded it's still compelling. There is some of his very left-leaning politics from the 70s sprinkled throughout, but it's all relevant.

This is the mischievous, mad scientist Lex Luther from the silver age. I really don't have a problem with it though. As always Superman takes him down with a wink out to us. He's clever, and he knows how ridiculous Lex's schemes are. Just like us. False beards? Wigs? On the most well-known villain of all time? Come on.

The real villain, in the main plot, isn't nearly as compelling as the flashbacks to Smallville with Clark and Lex and their youth. It does help support some of the themes Maggin's working with though.

It's been several years since I've read this and I was kind of surprised with some of the more PG-13 material. Lois drops an s-bomb. Their encounter at the Hot Springs is pretty sexy. I didn't mind it. I just forgot about it.

I'm a lifelong Superman fan (I even have a tattoo) and this is the purest representation of the character that I know of. If you like the character, or if you're looking for reasons to like the character, you'd probably like this book

Mike McDevitt says

Even better than Maggin's Superman, Last Son of Krypton. No origin story to worry about here, Luthor is significant but not the primary villain.

Superman's character is seriously tested in ethical and physical battle with the demon prince of the netherworld. Also, time travelling historians! The unholy marriage of sf and fantasy works beautifully. It's a high compliment for me that this reminds me of Douglas Adams stuff; off the rails impossible and internally logical is a sweet thing to behold.

Absolutely more fun than Downbelow Station, which won the Hugo Award that year.
